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ISAAC PULGAR'S "SUPPORT OF THE RELIGION."

IN 1215 arose the order of Preaching Monks, the Predicants or Dominicans, founded by Dominic de Guzman (born 1170, died 1221). One of the chief aims of the order was to place at the disposal of the church the invaluable aid of skilled disputants, who should revive the drooping spirits of the faithful, and by the assaults of rhetoric and passion subdue the stubborn intellect of the unbeliever. Against their will, unoffending rabbis, men of books and of peace, were ferreted out from the safety of their obscurity, and forced to defend their religious teachings in the presence of kings and princes. The disputations of Rabbi Jehiel with Nicolaus, in Paris, in 1244; of Nachmanides with Friar Paul in 1263; of Meir ben Simon with the Archbishop of Narbonne, 1245; as well as others belong to this era, and were brought about by the activity of the Dominicans. Not trusting to themselves alone in this war of words, the ecclesiastical authorities called in the aid of some who had previously been Jews themselves.

Abner of Burgos, a profound Jewish scholar of the latter half of the thirteenth century, was one of a band of authors whose works and perhaps whose names are practically unknown outside a limited circle now, though at one time they occupied very greatly the thoughts of their contemporaries and immediate successors. They were, or represented themselves as, the disciples of Nachmanides¹. From the study of the mysteries of the Kabbala, wherein words and letters are made the foundations of mystic

¹ See Jellinek, *Beiträge zur Gesch. der Kab.*, pp. 48 and 49.

notions, and all things elude the grasp, the solid foundation of study passes away, and while all things can be easily proven, so too can all things be easily negated. Abner was not only a Talmudist and Kabbalist of repute, he was a *médecin*, too,—so at least says Carmoly¹, who at the same time sums up in a few sentences most that we know of Abner. According to this account, Abner was born at Burgos in 1270, but it was at Valladolid that he followed the practice of medicine. He died in 1346, in the seventy-sixth year of his age. It was as a man of sixty² that Abner left the faith of his fathers, and he became one of the most determined enemies of the religion he had discarded. From the stores of his extensive knowledge he wrote book after book wherein he exhibited, to the delight of his new patrons, and to the horror of his flesh and blood still strong in their allegiance to the citadel he had quitted, the weak points in the armour of Zion. While yet a young man Abner had composed several Hebrew works, among which is a commentary upon one of the writings of Ibn Ezra. His later works are devoted, however, to the defence of his new faith or to attacks upon Judaism. He put aside all that could remind him of Judaism, and he adopted the name of Alphonso after the reigning sovereign Alphonso XI. As a convert he wrote a book entitled *ספר מלחמות מצוה* (The Book of the Wars of Duty), directed against the "*ס' מלחמות ה'*" (The Book of the Wars of God) of Joseph Kimhi; another called *ס' מנחת קנאות* (The Offering of Zeal) in defence of the Christian religion, and *ס' מרים* (The Book of Miriam, i. e. Maria) for the same purpose. Other writings of Abner are the *מורה צדק* (The Righteous Teacher), *La Concordia de las Leyes* (The Agreement of the two Testaments), while he is credited with being the Alphonsus Bonhominis, who translated a polemical work from Arabic into Latin. Reggio in his edition of the *בחינת הקבלה*, Goritiae, 1852, quotes a work of Abner's containing a number of criticisms

¹ See *Revue Orientale*, 1861, p. 519, quoting Ferrara, *Hist. gén. d'Espagne*.

² Wolf, IV, p. 786.

of the decisions of the Tur, *Hoshen Mishpat*, see XIII, pp. 51, 193. Bedarride says Abner that wrote a book in Spanish on the plague¹. Abner went further than this. He presented charges against the Jews before the king in regard to their prayers, and a public investigation of the matter was held at Valladolid.

These attacks of Abner met with many a rejoinder², and of these the following may be called to mind: Joseph Shalom, Isaac Nathan, Moses Narboni in his מאמר הבהירה, Shemtob Shaprut in אבן בוהן, § 14, Moses Cohen Tordesillas (1375) in his עזר האמונה, and Isaac of Acco in מאירת עינים³. The שלשלת הקבלה, ed. Venice, 1587, p. 56, gives an account of an interview between Abner and Nachmanides, when the latter discomfits his opponent with an apt quotation from the Bible. Another rejoinder to Abner's attack is the *Ezer ha-Dat* עזר הדת (the Support of Religion) of Pulgar, the subject of the present notes.

The MS. of the *Ezer ha-Dat*, of the Montefiore College, Codex 94 (in the recently published *Catalogue of the Montefiore MSS.* the MS. of the עזר הדת bears the number 285), is a small 8vo volume of 91 leaves, written on both sides of the leaf, in a Spanish hand. It belonged formerly to the valuable Halberstam collection, which Dr. Gaster's care and foresight secured for the use of students in England. It is interesting to note that the MS. was formerly the property of a convert to Judaism, for on a fly-leaf we find the following אני הקטן והצעיר אברהם בן אברהם אבינו, liber est meus, est Deus illum querit hoc Nominerit Abraham natus Prinze. The MS. is clearly written, and shows by the notes on its margin that it has been read with care, for we meet with glosses and suggestions that seem to be in the handwriting of Prinze himself. Graetz's quotations from the *Ezer ha-Dat* are from the Breslau

¹ *Juifs en France*, &c., p. 201.

² See Steinschneider in *E. und G.'s Encycl.*, p. 410; and Kayserling, *Sephardim*, p. 327.

³ See Jellinek, *Beiträge*, p. 48.

Codex, No. 53. A part of the work has been printed in the *ספר וקנים* of Ashkenazi, Frankfurt am Main, 1854 (corresponding with ff. 28 b-41 a of the Montefiore Codex). Another and much smaller fragment appeared in the *Revue des Études Juives*, 1889, p. 64 (corresponding with ff. 74 a-76 a, and ff. 77-80 of the Montefiore MS.). With the exception of a line or two in Graetz's *Geschichte*, vol. VII, p. 443, nothing else has appeared in print of this valuable and interesting contribution to a literature, which to the present day stands second to none in holding its own in the affections of readers and students¹.

The author of the *Ezer ha-Dat* was Rabbi Isaac Pulgar, or more fully Isaac ben Joseph ben Pulgar, of whose personal history but little is known². The usual authorities quote each other, but add little themselves to the scanty stock of information. Graetz tells us that Pulgar was a common family name in Castille, and quotes a Fernando Pulgar, who was secretary of Ferdinand and Isabella, and author of a royal chronicle. Ibn Shaprut calls our author *ר' יצחק בן פוליקר*, and Steinschneider, Isaac Ibn Polqar. Here I follow Graetz, and adopt the form Pulgar. As has been said little is known of Pulgar, but an attentive study of his work reveals him as a profound scholar with wide attainments, in touch and sympathy with the busy life around him, and possessing an intimate knowledge of almost every branch of science then cultivated. His knowledge of Talmud is thorough, and this is especially seen in the Dialogue on Astrology, wherein Pulgar is called upon to square contradictory passages from the Talmud in regard to that pseudo-science. He possessed likewise an excellent acquaintance with

¹ If Alphonse died in 1346, at the age of seventy-six, and if it was as a man of sixty that he left Judaism, I think we may for all necessary purposes assume that the *Ezer ha-Dat* was composed somewhere about 1335 to 1345.

² Carmoly, *R. O.*, I, p. 327; Wolf, I, p. 687; compare also Steinschneider's *Pseudepigraph. Literat.*, p. 32.

Arabic literature, and he quotes or refers to, as the case may be, in approval or otherwise, Ibn Gazali, §¹ 41 a, 52 a; Ibn Zaled, 42; Ibn Sina, 80 a; Ibn Hamad the Ishmaeli e, רברי אבו חמאר הישמעאלי המוויפיים, 61 a; Betalmius (=Ptolemy) 48, and Aristo are referred to § 35, 64 a, 66; Isaac ben Balag, § 52; Ibn Ezra, § 54; R. Jehudah ha-Hasid, 54; and a certain renowned Cabbalist מריקוס מריקוס, Maistre Marcus, 75 a; a book on witchcraft; the works of הרמאם (=Hermes) and בליאנוס (=Appolonius) on magic and ריקוניים; an "Egyptian" work, El Falah el Nabit, אל פלאח אל נאבית, § 50; and works on the names of angels and demons, &c. From the MS. we gather that Pulgar composed a commentary on Genesis, § 9; one on Ecclesiastes, often quoted, e. g. §§ 53, 53 a, &c., and another on the book of Psalms, § 59. He wrote also a book entitled מוסר בנין, § 76; and lastly a refutation of astrology, חברתנו בהכחשות האצטמנינות, § 54, a copy of which is in the Vatican Library²—in all five works. To these we add Pulgar's works enumerated by Graetz, viz. a continuation of Albalag's works; the מנחת קנאות against Abner's אנרת החרפות; a Spanish work against astrology (though this perhaps may be הכחשת האצטמנינות mentioned above), and the עזר הדת now before us—or nine works in all.

Pulgar was an old and intimate friend of Abner's (§ 8 a), and it is not difficult to imagine something of the feeling of surprise and disgust with which the news of Abner's conversion must have moved Pulgar. Geiger, in his *Dichtungen*, pp. 51, 52, gives specimens of the war of words, in the form of rhymed expostulation which took place between the two men. At length, no doubt, all intercourse was broken off. Abner, now an official of the Church, was drawing upon the stores of his knowledge to attack and defame his ancestral faith, while Pulgar, urged by friends around, girded up his loins to meet the attack. But Pulgar's views and wishes, his outlook and his ambition

¹ The sign § refers to the pages of the Montefiore Codex.

² See Wolf, I, p. 687.

were wider. Abner's was but one of the many attacks which Judaism had to bear in those unhappy days. Besides it would have been impolitic, even dangerous to have answered Abner point by point. In his treatment of Christianity he was reserved, had to be reserved. He is careful. He is more outspoken when he deals with astrology, with the worship of images and the invocation of saints. But yet withal genial and fair. Judging from the *Ezer ha-Dat*, the Jewry of Pulgar's day was a busy one, with its contending parties, from the extreme on the one hand, of the deniers of all faith to the opposite, i. e. those that believed childishly in imposture of every description. Arranged between in endless gradations were the careful, cautious men, holding fast to the faith and religious practices they had received from their elders, but holding on also with equal tenacity to the study of natural science. In the world which we view in Pulgar's work, we meet the ignorant and learned, the rabbi, the doctor, the astrologer, the Kabbalist, the wizard, the witch, the gambler, the toiler working in the sweat of the brow, mentally indolent, supporting all quackery, and at the background, as a sinister reminder of evil omen, the renegade and convert, ready to turn all he knew to the lowest of purposes—to blacken the faith of Israel and to besmirch the fame of its teachers—to inform upon a brother's deed, and to spy upon a father's word.

The *Ezer ha-Dat* is written in bright, vivid, racy Hebrew, if I may use the expression, by a man who well knew how to use the pen. It abounds in passages of rare beauty, passing on to others of playful sarcasm and profound scholarship, and withal a rare devotion to the truth. There is also in it the same happy use of Biblical phrases in new setting that is met with in many other writings of the period and which strikes the reader with such pleasure, like the meeting of old friends unexpectedly; the same easy-flowing, exhaustless torrent of clever ingenious phraseology, that charms and hurries us along in the pleasant

company of the genial writer. A large part of the work is written in the so-called "rhymed prose," chiefly known to most as the vehicle of Alcharizi's *Tachkemoni*, of the Hebrew work, *Ben ha-Melech ve-ha-Nazir* (The Prince and the Derwish), Ibn Hasdai's adaptation of the Arabic, the *Mashal ha-Kadmoni*, &c. There is likewise in the *Ezer ha-Dat* the similar system of prologue and epilogue of verse, the latter being put into the mouth of the disputants, or the victor of them, or in the mouth of the judge or umpire. The dialogue form, so much admired in old writers, is used, and promising to be fair to all sides, Pulgar more than keeps his word.

Let us turn now to the work itself, and as far as space will permit, call in the aid of the actual words of Isaac Pulgar in order the better to elucidate his arguments.

הקדמה INTRODUCTION.

In his introduction Pulgar deals with five classes of opponents. Firstly, those who argue with the equipment of but a superficial knowledge of Scripture, כת האנשים אשר לא השתדלו ולא התעסקו בקריאת ספרי הקדש וחיבורי הדת ולא באו עד עומקה כי לא ידעו ערכה. The second class comprise the "Epi-koros." The third are the believers in astrology, החוברים בחכמותם, כי כל פרטי שינויי הדברים נגזרים ומחוייבים מאת השמים טרם היותם וכו'. The fourth are superstitious people, eager for what is abnormal, ומשתוקקים לשמוע ולקבל ספורי שקרי. The fifth are infidels, among whom are included those who deny the future life of the soul, and of doctrine of reward and punishment, ויזילו בדת. To combat these, and to show forth something of the glory and majesty of the Jewish religion, Pulgar composes his work, the subject to be treated suggesting the title וקראתי שמו כפי פעולתו עזר הדת. As we may naturally expect, the book is divided into five parts, each part professing to deal with one class of the above-mentioned opponents. Part I deals with the pre-emi-

nence of the religion of Israel; part II, the consonance of religion with true philosophy; part III, the worthlessness of the claims of astrology, because things run in a natural manner, entirely independent of the position and movements of the stars; in part IV Pulgar refutes the believers in prodigies, and in part V discourses on the immortality of the soul. To render the work pleasant and easy reading, Pulgar promises to introduce short poems, riddles, and Agadic narratives, and further he says that due prominence and a fair hearing shall be given to the views of his opponents, and the better to do this, he will introduce the dialogue form *האמת כי יאמרו המקנאים* וכדי שלא יתחכמו ותחזקו לבלתי כתוב הטענות אשר כנגדי בדעות ההם דברתי תחכמו ותחזקו לבלתי כתוב הטענות אשר כנגדי בדעות ההם דברתי. *בו ברוב הדעות כמותוכה עם בעל מחלקות וכו'.* After thus paying his devoirs, like a chivalrous knight of old times, Pulgar opens his first part.

PART I.

Pulgar laments the evils brought upon Israel by renegades who defame their old associates, *והנה אנשים יוצאים מבני* עמנו, נוספים גם הם על שונאינו, ומתנכלים להלחם עלינו להרגנו. He has often expostulated personally with such men with varying results, and at last at the request of those to whom deference is due, takes his pen in hand—*באו אלי חבירי*—התמימים הנאהבים והנעימים, ויבקשו מעמי לכתוב להם בספר ענייני תוכחתי ואודות מלחמתי ויטב הדבר בעיני, ואומר עת לעשות לה', וחברתי את מאמר הזה אשר קראתי תשובת אפיקורוס, להקהות את שיני הסכלים החושבים להלחם בנו, ולהתוכה אצלנו, *בהיות האמת עמנו*. The chapter or treatise—*מאמר הזה*—was likely enough the one object of Pulgar's pen, and doubtless the success it met with and the encouragement Pulgar received, led him to go further and endeavour to deal with other classes of critics. This treatise is divided into eight paragraphs, and deals with such matters as the necessity of revelation, for man's nature needs it, the excellence of the Torah, that Moses is the chief of the prophets, the future life, the coming of the

Messiah, &c. I pass all this by, except to remark that through these pages runs the cheery optimism of the devout Jew—the *וְנִשְׁמַח*—making the best of persecution, and clinging as proudly as ever to the belief that the possession and obedience to the Law of God is the highest nobility and happiness of man. But as an example of his method let us see how Pulgar proves that Moses is worthy to be considered the chief of the prophets, the burden of the seventh principle of Maimonides, as well as his treatment of the question of a future life. First, in respect of Moses, twelve are the characteristics of the true leader and guide of men, the possession of which in such a leader justifies mankind in placing confidence in him. They are as follows: (1) he should be healthy and strong, physically; (2) with a due knowledge of his powers and the calls of nature upon him; (3) of a retentive memory; (4) logical, able to educe the unknown from what is known; (5) fluent in his speech; (6) anxious to assist others from the stores of his own knowledge; (7) a lover of truth; (8) temperate, abstemious; (9) animated by a becoming self-respect; (10) independent, possessing a sufficiency, yet using wealth only as a means to an end; (11) a lover of justice and a friend of the innocent; and lastly, (12) self-reliant, because animated by the purest of motives. These are the characteristics desiderated by the Philosopher.

Pulgar adds, however, a thirteenth, that such a legislator and leader should be animated not by a love of men only, but by feelings of respect for them also. Yet says our author, where shall we find such a prodigy, what would be the life of such a man in this world of misery and sorrow? His good qualities would be but the instruments of his own undoing. But there would remain a sense of comradeship between such a man and those around him, and this link is the existence of the spiritual life which exists in all men, be it ever so weak and small. It is this which is common both to them and to him, and which would enable him to influence them, to guide and

cherish them, according to their ability to receive his instruction. Engaged in so noble a task, such a man would not willingly contemplate the extinction of his influence, both from a virtuous pride in his own power, and again by reason of the love he bears to mankind in general, extending to nations yet unborn, וזאת היא אמתת התורה המקודשת, אשרי העם שככה לו. In the character and history of Moses, alone, do we find all these great qualities combined, and Pulgar, with evident satisfaction, goes carefully through the list of thirteen points, and indicates, in the words of Scripture, how each and all are to be found in Moses, הנה הוכחתי לך כאשר יעדתי כי משה רבינו, Israel's great lawgiver, עליו השלום הוא מלכנו מלך על ישראל על עידה קדושה הוא היה ראוי ונאות להיות קצין וראש על עם הקודש.

The paragraph dealing with the future life is one of the most eloquent in the entire work. We look up to the heavens and planets, and we see, but know not what we see: we turn to the earth, and perplexity fills our hearts, כשיצאנו לעולם הזה . . . נשא עינינו לרום שמים נראה את' הכוכבים ושני המאורות מתנועעים אך לא נסיג תנועתם ואנה מגמתם, נשוב ונביט אל הארץ נראה הימים והנהרות וצמח האדמה והמתכות והחיים נעים קצתם לבקש צרכם וקצתם לנמור קץ חייהם. The plants live till the span of their life is reached, and then fade, and animals live but to seek to satisfy the means by which they live, ואחריתם המות וההשחתם ההפסד והתמורה. Their elements separate, and they are as if they never had been. The fate of man is equally sad, גם אנחנו קצתנו נקבור את קצתנו כל אחד יכרה שוחה, לצפון את חבירו לבשתנו ולחרפתנו, ונלך ברגלנו ונדרוך על ראשי אבותינו, וגם בנינו ככה יעשו על ראשינו, זה משפט הראשונים, וגם יקרה לאחרונים, ולא נדע מאין באנו, מראשית בריאתנו, ואם יש תקוה לאחריתנו, סוד מקום עמוק עמוק מי ימצאו.

We pass to the various expectations which men have formed concerning the state and joys of the world to come. There are those who look upon death but as a passage or transition, כי אם נסיעה ממקום למקום, and that the pleasures of this world will be increased a thousandfold, and eating and drinking, with eternal appetite, will be men's lot in

the **עולם הבא**. Others look upon death as the last stage of this "sad eventful history," the falling of the curtain, the end of all, of good and bad alike. **אין שום הבטחה והחקה** • **אף לשומר מצוה** • **ואין אחרית ליתרון** • **לבעל הכשרון** • רק כמות זה בן מות זה • **מות זה** • ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין • כי הכל הבל. At death, the elements of which our bodies are composed separate, and then, exactly as with animals and plants, they join the constituents of nature from which they severally came; we can neither aid nor impede this; for the heart which palpitates with righteous aspirations nothing remains; without choice man comes, without responsibility he disappears. But a fuller examination of the matter, says Pulgar, relieves our minds from this load of sadness. The future life is that state when, freed from all low and ignoble influence and desire, the divine spirit will be no longer held captive within the folds of the body. The human body is not an essential element of life; the body is but the instrument and tool of the divine spirit within. **ואל יעלה בלבבך כי הגוף הוא החלק מן האדם ולכן יאבד** • **ויכלה בהשחתתו** • רק הגוף הוא איברים וכלים אשר בהם יפעל האדם האמתי אשר הוא המחשב והצייר השכלי • והוא צלם האלהים אשר במאמרו וברשותו יתעורר להניע המניע הקרוב לאיברי הגוף • והוא הכח המשתוקק הרצוני אשר הוא צורת הגוף הדק הנכבד האלהי והוא הרוח הקודש § 16. This divine impulse generates in man the good inclination **יצר הטוב**, while its passivity, owing to man's wilfulness, gives use to the bad inclination **יצר הרע** or **שטן**. It is not the aim of his work, says Pulgar, to develop these theories. Enough, however, has been given to show the position of Jewish philosophers in regard to the condition in the Future Existence. Lightly touching on the sad state of Israel, Pulgar passes on to the subject of the Messiah. His treatment of the matter is similar, for instance, to that of Albo. The belief in the Messiah is not so much a dogma of Judaism as a necessary consequence to the belief in the veracity of the Scriptures, i. e. it is a matter which depends upon individual explanation of the text of Scripture **אין ראוי לשום מכשול להאמין כי**

אמונתנו תלויים בביאת משיחנו • כי אם הוא איפשר לשום אדם שום § 22. The belief is valuable, though it does not portend any alteration of nature, for as the rabbis have told us, לימות המשיח אלא שיעבור מלכיות בלבד a phrase which our author quotes with much satisfaction. But though believing that the Scriptures foretell the coming of the Messiah—though an open mind would perhaps better describe his position—Pulgar goes on to prove that so far the Messiah has not come, and he takes us through all the well-known Messianic passages to support his argument. Whoever Jesus was, whoever he claimed to be, or his disciples and followers claim on his behalf, Jesus, says Pulgar, was not the Messiah foretold by the prophets. It is here that we get an introduction to Abner, the former friend of Isaac Pulgar, פעם אחר נתחברתי עם איש אחר חי נפשי מהיר ויודע בדרכי הדת גם בפילוסופיא • ובא עד קצו • למלאות חפצו • ונמה לבו לשוב מדרכי תורתנו • הוא שמו מקורם ר' אבנר • ויען ויאמר לי בהתוכחו אצלי • תאמן בדברי חכמי התלמוד הקדומים • ובדבריהם הנעימים • ואומר הן • בחכמים אני מאמן ומדבריהם לא אמה ימין ושמאל • כי חכמתם אמונתי והבנת דיעותיהם § 24 a. Having thus agreed upon a common foundation and basis of argument, Abner, we are told, challenges Pulgar, and offers to prove from the Talmud itself the necessity of a further revelation, or, in other words, the necessity of the New Testament. ויאמר לי אם אמונת חכמים תבקש • אני אראה אותך מדבריהם • ואאלפך ממועצותיהם • איך דת היהודים אשר בלבך חשובה וחרושה יהיה בטלה ואנושה • כאשה גרושה § 24 a. The answer of Pulgar deserves the utmost consideration, as it shows us not only the manner by which *he* meets this challenge, but also because it doubtless reveals the standpoint from which the Jewish sages in Spain viewed the serious matter of conversion in the constant controversies of the time. By reason of their by no means too secure position and from the fear of offending the ruling powers, the rabbi had to be wary. He had to weigh his words. He had to be careful not to use words that might even be construed by the

mischief-maker into sentiments of disrespect to the faith of the people, the practices of the priests, and the acts of royalty. He must needs conduct a war of defence. Pulgar proceeds to justify the Oral Tradition by showing its need. The Torah, he says, deals only with questions of faith and theory. But at the same time it refers to matters of daily practice, wherein its authority is supreme. The Torah, therefore, constantly needs elucidation and commentary before its behests can be put into practice. The men of the great Sanhedrin, in their piety and wisdom, had shown us how, notwithstanding the perplexing variety of each day's events, to keep the spirit of the Torah and as many of its commands as circumstances require. The course of events rendered it necessary to commit to writing as many of the dicta of the sages as could be got together, and they exist for us, though with but little care for order or proper arrangement, in the volumes of the Talmud. But the Talmud contains also a mass of material, dealing with every conceivable subject, important and the contrary, מבלי שיבררו את התבן מן הבר' ואת הבריא מן הנשבר' ואת, § 26. This great work of codification of the Talmud was undertaken by Maimonides, who has arranged in his master work, the משנה תורה, all that is essential for our faith and religious life from the vast material to be found in the Talmud. Those matters, however, which are essential neither to the elucidation of the doctrines of our faith nor the needs of our religious duties are omitted from this work, and they do but engage our attention either by reason of our respect and affection for their authors or for their purely intrinsic value. The valuable elements in these we take, the rest we leave, either because, it may be, they seem opposed to our faith, or because the real meaning of the sage is not clear to us אין מושיבין על ההגדה. Turning now to Abner, Pulgar thus continues: As for thy challenge, let this suffice thee. Though we greatly respect the sages our guide is the Torah and Reason. What is opposed to the Torah (Deut. xiii. 2-6) we will not accept. What is opposed

to Reason and Experience we will not accept either. What is contradictory to Nature or to Reason can find no room amongst us ומדרך הסברה אשאלך אלו באו אליך אנשים רבים מוחזקים מארץ רחוקה מגידים שראו שלשה שיעורים שוים מדרו אותם ומצאו שנים מהם יחדיו בלתי גדולים מן השלישי או שראו חי בלתי מדבר משכיל בהם, ומתנבא התאמין בהם § 27. Judaism is founded on the Torah, and is agreeable to Reason, and in Pulgar's opinion, not indeed expressed, but clearly implied, Abner's new faith is neither the one nor the other 'על יסודי האמת והדק עשויה ובנויה' § 27. In the last paragraph of this part of the book Pulgar deals with the various kinds of readers, each with his own peculiar tendencies and exaggerations, and to each of them the words of the sages naturally appear to give forth a different meaning. There is the wise student, subjecting all to a reverent investigation, and, on the other hand, the reader who looks upon such a method as impiety. The former, says Pulgar, is more likely to reach to the real meaning, and the better able to withstand temptation than the latter; the latter is perhaps a little too modest ואומר שאי אפשר לנו וגם לא לכל הבאים אחרינו להשיג שום נעלם בשכלנו, כי כל ההשגות והדירות אצלו (=according to his opinion) כבר תמו ונשלמו בימי החכמים והקדמונים המוחזקים בעיני כענין שאין לנו שום רשות להוסיף עליהם ולא להרהר בצד השגותיהם § 27 a. A living tradition is ever aware of the needs of a living community, and therefore provides for all. In the Talmud are to be seen explanations suitable for all, especially for the simple and undoubting nature of the student who takes things in their literal sense. The Torah, we read, has no less than seventy explanations. Yet we know the Torah is one, and has no second. The phrase is, therefore, only a hint to the teacher to render his teaching comprehensible to the simplest as well as to the most refined intelligence, that all men may learn of God. How truly admirable, explains Pulgar, must have been the character of those revered men who could take so large a view of mankind, and arrange so well for all!

PART II.

The larger portion of this part of the עור הרת has already appeared. It was printed in the מעם זקנים of Israel Ashkenazi, Frankfurt a. M. 1854, pp. 12-19, from a Paris MS. This fragment occupies over twenty pages of the Montefiore Codex, namely, from fol. 28 a to fol. 41. Ashkenazi's extract is complete in itself, and is an excellent specimen of vivid Hebrew dialogue. Only one who has gone through it can become aware of all the interesting points of the argument—the fairness with which both sides, the divine and the philosopher, get their hearing. Its beauty grows with renewed acquaintance. The opinion of the reader as to the relative merits of the disputants inclines first to the one side and then to the other. Pulgar enlivens the discussion, as is his custom, with wit and humour. The sarcasm is rich. A knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and an acquaintance with the many Talmudical phrases is required if the reader is to grasp the give and take of the arguments as they are bandied about. The picture of the two men is very skilfully drawn. The ancient venerable divine, bearing his years lustily, with his withering contempt for his young antagonist, conscious that so far the world is on his side, is well contrasted with that of the young philosopher, full of new knacks and notions, a little flighty too, and with loud assertion of his ability to reconcile Faith and Science, a labour which the divine thinks unnecessary, and if performed entirely useless. But the Montefiore Codex has much more in this second part than is contained in Ashkenazi's fragment. For after the hearer and narrator (המגיד) has returned home the argument is, as it were, resumed between the narrator מגיד and a philosopher פילוסוף (the argument before, we ought to explain, was held between a זקן and a נער), in which the opinions of various Arabian philosophers become the subject of a conversation concerning Free-will, the Eternity of Matter, God's interference and interest, or otherwise, in mundane affairs. The

final decision will perhaps be made all the clearer by a short *résumé*. It appears, as already stated, that a report of the original controversy was brought by the hearer to his native town, which report itself gives rise to a further discussion. Gazzali's arguments against the philosophers are mentioned, when there arises a man, Abraham, who reminds the bystanders that Gazzali's strictures of philosophy have already been met and answered by the counter-arguments of Abu Alzalid and by R. Isaac ben Albalag (§ 42 a) (our MS. has the word יצחק Isaac, written and marked out and אברהם inserted). The man Abraham proceeds then to sum up the whole lengthy discussion in something like the following manner: Is it not the better plan to hold fast to the belief in the continuity and permanence of the creative act הנצחי החמידי, § 42 a, rather than to say that God's power was, as it were, brought to an end at the termination of the week of creation? In other words, God did not endow Nature with a continuous generative faculty and power of adjusting Matter. The Universe is continually renewed by God, who exerts to-day a power and control over Matter equal to that when he first called the world into being. God is constantly at work in the world כפי שפעל תמיד ויפעל, § 42 a. God reneweth every day the works of the creation. Thus the act of prayer is a logical one, and its hope of fulfilment a becoming one for a philosopher to stand by בקשת השואל והמשאלת • מרצה ונאצלת • ותפלת המתפלל מקובלת • ובתחנה תקוה ותוחלת, § 42 a. But the subject of the prayer, or rather the object prayed for, must be a possible one; it must be within the bounds of what God in his absolute untrammelled free-will fixed as proper, that is, possible. God knoweth what is possible, and what is not possible or proper הנמנע אשר לא יכשר. Now, says Pulgar, the possible is twofold. What is possible in action אפשרות בפועל, and what is possible in the "acted" אפשרות בנפעל. God's will and God's power are alike unlimited, but in order to benefit mankind God has placed a limit to his own unrestricted power.

Power is responsibility, if we may say so, even in the case of God, and this world is governed by a moral Governor, and not by an irresponsible tyrant. It would be tyranny to rule sentient creatures in a captious, capricious, constantly changing way. Pulgar, fearing perhaps that he is becoming too dogmatic, says further that this abstention on the part of the Divinity is voluntary, and that occasions have arisen when God has directly interfered with the usual order of Nature נגמ בזה אפשרות הנסים באומתנו על ידי גדולי ' כפי הסדר המכוסה והנעלם § 43 a.

This explanation brings about the result we expect. The opposition is disarmed, and harmony reigns supreme ותקניה חצי קשתו ' וכתית חרבו לקשתו ' וישבר את כל מלחמתו ' אשר היו אתו. Part II concludes with praise to God:—

ראה כי דת ותושיה באחת
מקושרות מדובקות כלולות
אחיות הן קרובות ואהובות
בהסכמה ושנותן הן שתולות

PART III.

This part deals with the question of Astrology, a matter which occupied so great a position in the Middle Ages that we are bewildered when we observe the talent that was devoted to its study, and the greatness and fame of the men who were guided by the oracles of the astrologers. The great mediaeval rabbis were nearly all enthusiastic believers in this pseudo science, which finds a thoroughgoing defence in some commentaries, and a place in the liturgical compositions of the time. Sachs, in *הזינוה*, I, p. 61, suggests that the belief of the rabbis in Astrology was rather in the nature of an attempt to make a compromise between the apparent Talmudic support of the belief and their own more rationalistic methods of exegesis¹. Ibn Ezra, perhaps

¹ See Steinschneider, "Jüd. Lit.," in *E. u. G.'s Encycl.*, p. 441; Sachs, *הזינוה*, I, pp. 59-93; and Zunz's *Relig. Poesie*, p. 250. The literature on the subject is a large and interesting one.

the most devoted, certainly the most famous of the many followers of Astrology (though Pulgar, § 54, protests against the practice of regarding Ibn Ezra and Jehudah the Hasid as believers), mentions Jacob Ibn Tarik and Andruzagar ben Zadi Faruk, and among others may be mentioned also Shabbattai Donolo, 913-970, Abraham ben Hiyya, Abraham ben David of Posquières, Jehudah ha-Levi (in *Kuzari*, IV, 9, but see also *Kuzari*, IV, 23), Abraham Ibn Daud, author of the *Emunah Ramah*, Albo (see *Ikkarim*, IV, 4), Isaak Arama, author of the '*Akedah*, Shelomoh b. Aderet—all of whom show the influence of the current belief in their writings. Maimonides, however, opposed the belief, asserting that it bordered on idolatry, see the *Yad*, *Akkum*, XI, 8. The reader may also turn to Harizi's polemic against astrologers in his *Tachkemoni*, chap. xxii. A study of this part of the עור הרת will show us the vigour and independence of Pulgar as a thinker. He attacks Astrology. He pours ridicule on the pretences of the astrologers. He laughs at its dupes. He shows it to be a source of imposture, depressing the brave, and enervating the hopeful. He asserts that the astrologers do but repeat each other, and repetition and not justification is the source and foundation of their belief. And going to the very front and forehead of the science, the original and much lauded authorities upon whom astrologers relied, and whom it is sinful to criticize and question, he asks who are these men that so much reliance should be placed upon their opinions. Neither should we rely upon the reports of the ignorant mob אין מביאין ראיה מקלי השכל אוהבי הגזמות מתנהלים בבה הדמיון והנאותיו • ומן הירוע כי ברוב המון משחקים לאמונת ההפלגות • • • וסיפורי השדים והבלי הכישוף ומתפארים בעצמם כי על ידיהם יתגלו נעלמות ונפלאות כאלה, § 60. Pulgar, it is apparent, had a fine, healthy contempt for wonder-mongers. Our author discusses the matter in a dialogue between two speakers—an Astrologer הוור and a חכר, a thinker (Haber), and an interesting, even amusing debate it proves to be. In the market-place of a populous town stands the Astrologer addressing the large

crowd gathered before him. At his side stands his table covered with the various instruments of his science, the astrolabe, circles, sun-dials, mathematical tools, books of charts, &c. ויהי בתוכם איש מהוברי שמים • החושב בדעתו כי הוא חוזה בכוכבים. ומבשר העתידות • הוא עומד על רגליו • וכלי הנחשת תלוי באצבעו ומכוון להביא ניצוצי השמש בנקבי הגשר ולהבין הרשת ולהעמיד לוחותיו • ולפניו שולחן ערוך • עליו ספרים פתוחים מצויירים ורקועים במיני צבעונים כלוחות מעשה אלהים • רביע עגולה מחוגה ומשרטטת וכלים משונים מכלים (§ 45), a life-like sketch. Among the crowd stood a scholarly man מחברינו. After listening to the speech of the Astrologer for some time he stepped forward and took up the challenge on behalf of true science למור ההגיונות והטבעיות והאלהיות, and the discussion commences. It is witty and clever, and heavy blows are exchanged between the champions. The fortunes of the day vary, both speakers earning their fair share of success. The Astrologer, as we may suppose, is much shocked at the levity of the Haber, who answers that in his attitude of criticism he does but follow the examples of Abraham and Moses, who in their generation sought to uproot the superstitions of their contemporaries. The success of these men of the Bible was but partial, and much remains to-day upon the surface of the earth which debases truth. Astrology, asserts the Haber, is forbidden to us alike by the Torah and Reason. He then proceeds to explain that there is nothing occult or mysterious even in the case of prophecy. Ordinary men argue on the basis of probability. So, too, does the prophet. Wherein, then, consists the difference? The difference is slight, though in another sense profound. The data of the prophet's reasoning are fuller and wider. The prophet takes into account the immutable laws of God's morality, and his earnestness is based on his conviction that if those laws be disobeyed certain disastrous results follow, as sure as cause and effect. The prophet is statesman in the exercise of the highest functions of the latter. The view of a statesman is often limited; that of the prophet never החושב ישיג קצת הסיבות לא כולן וקצת מונעים לא כולן •

והנביא ישן כל הסיבות וכל המונעים כאשר הם מכלי שיתעלם ממנו דבר ' § 51 a. Yet even the predictions of the prophet are at times put aside, e.g. the repentance of Nineveh and the warning of Jonah. The discussion now passes to an examination of the question of Free-will and Necessity, that problem of the ages, always new and always old. The Astrologer argues, of course, against Free-will, the Haber in favour of the same; there we get the interesting note that Pulgar had written a study on Kohelet, § 53, קהלת, כאשר ביארחי בפירושי ל' קהלת, § 53 a. The text referred to is Eccles. v. 7. This verse the Astrologer had quoted, and the following is the Haber's explanation given in his work: "The great aim of Solomon's book is to point out the mutability of all earthly things. Nothing is permanent. All things hasten to change their external forms. Yet let not man be too greatly distressed at this, for similar changes await the view of all generations, and to be distressed then at a necessary condition of life is absurd. Nevertheless, the spectacle of constant change will generate in the heart of man a becoming reverence and fear of God. God must be man's hope, the one permanent Being, and not the false appearances to which the Astrologer directs the gaze of his dupes. Again, let no man be unduly depressed at the sight of misery and oppression. Tyranny is but the act of a mortal, here to-day and in the grave to-morrow, and the actor and the action alike doomed to pass away, and the righteous shall inherit the earth. 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow,' said Koheleth, 'for thou knowest not what a day shall bring forth.' Shall astrology then claim Solomon as authority for its false prognostications?" The Astrologer then avers that the sages of the Talmud inculcate the belief in astrology—מול מהכים מול מעשירי הכל תלוי במול, and undoubtedly, admits the Haber, some of the ancients believed in astrology. David sought to know the day of his death. It was hidden from him, and from all mortals too, including astrologers. Rab and

Shemuel spoke against the practice. So did Akiba ; so did Natan bar Yitzhak, Rab bar Nahman, and others. And so the discussion proceeds. Anon the combatants attack the insoluble problem—the prosperity of the wicked and the unfortunate state of the pious לו רשע וטוב לו צדיק ורע לו רשע וטוב לו צדיק. The Bible, says the Haber, teaches us to follow the good and forsake the evil. He who follows this does well, and vice versa. Take an example. Two men travel. They come upon a deep, wide river, which blocks their progress, and, alas, without a bridge at hand. A man sitting upon the bank informs them that lower down there is a bridge. “Go there,” said he, “and cross in peace.” The wise man, using his brains, seeks out the bridge, and crosses in safety ; the other distrusts the advice, and is drowned in his attempt to swim across. Safety and danger more often than not, says the Haber truly enough, are in our own hands, and we bring most of our misfortunes upon ourselves. And even in the midst of misfortunes the good man sees subjects for intense satisfaction, and he is never entirely overwhelmed. Pulgar speaking as the Haber tells the Astrologer to read up his (Pulgar’s) work on the Psalms (המעיין בהקדמת פירוש, לספר תהלות, § 59), says he has shown that there is no real contradiction between the theory that God cares for the righteous and the reality of the ills that befall them. The Haber is not to have it all his own way. “Suppose,” says the Astrologer, “all the arguments are on your side. Nevertheless, *facts* are against you. Events *have* been foretold. What then ?” The Haber denies it. His opponent, holding to his first opinion that events have been foretold, says that where predictions have been falsified the reason was because the prognosticator was not qualified, and did not understand his business. “Oh,” says the Haber, laughing, “you put me in mind of the story of the fisherman. He had bought putrid fish, and exposed it for sale in the market. The crowd drew back at the fearful smell. ‘Come on,’ said he, ‘come and buy, my fish is good. It is I that am putrid !’ ” At this the Astrologer’s patience gives out, and

he declines to continue the argument. The Haber thereupon proceeds to formulate certain weighty reasons to justify his opposition to astrology חזקות טענות פה הנני מסדר הנהני מסדר פה טענות חזקות וראויות ברורות מורות אליך ולכל הטוענים בעד ההוברים כי עיקרי המלאכה ההיא נשחתים ונפסדים וגו'. Incidents arise from natural causes, i. e. we know what will be the result of the depredations of locusts upon vegetation. Let no man believe what some philosophers have taught, that matter possesses endless possibilities, because since the Creator has impressed his will upon matter its potentialities are necessarily limited by the control of such will. The Creator has chosen to impress upon matter an order and form—i. e. it has become "natural." The forms of matter, it is conceivable, are not limited, or not yet complete, but the act of creation renders the process orderly and not arbitrary. Again, it is universally acknowledged that the superior governs the inferior; how then shall the planets, purely material bodies, influence and control the decisions of the mind of man? All the stars in the heavens could not make a three-sided figure anything but a triangle. Further, we observe around us an orderly procession of facts and incidents, everywhere but in the mental sphere. Men hesitate. They are often undecided. They are free. If you assert that mental acts are controlled and inevitable, as are physical results, what becomes of the soul and the freedom of the will? Here the Astrologer begins to give way, and acknowledges the weight and value of the Haber's arguments, who therefore continues, perhaps in a little more complacent mood. It may be that certain changes result from the position of the stars; such as atmospheric changes. But man is endowed with energy and industry. He can, as it were, put aside such influence, or act as to counterbalance their weight. He is master of his fate. He may, if he will, become as a skilled equestrian that can control the fiery steed, which, however, would throw an inexperienced rider. Both men at last shake hands, swear eternal friendship, and the disputation is at an end. But the crowd around was angry. "If the stars will

not help us, what shall become of us all?" they cried in anguish. "They have taken away his God, what can he do now?" The answer from the two friends is the old answer. God will help those that help themselves. They must not depend upon the stars and lead a life of idleness. They must put their shoulders to the wheel. The stars in heaven will not weed their fields, nor gather in their crops. Work brings wealth; indolence spells ruin. But far better than a material prosperity is the equanimity of the mind based on study and the friendship of the wise. At these words joy came to the congregation (the Kahal קהל—observe the subtle touch, not to המון the crowd, the mob is always foolish), and they, too, praised God. The narrator המניד, the man that witnessed and reported the discussion, hereupon comes forward, and in a singularly beautiful poem repeats the lesson of responsibility, industry, and fearlessness in well doing. God's mercies are daily renewed for the benefit of mankind, therefore let not the fear of plague or misfortune enervate a man in his daily work. With all the charm in his pen Pulgar sings the old text: Work, and God is faithful to compensate. As a specimen of Pulgar's verse I place the following before the reader:—

וקול אשא בתוכחתי וארים	§ 67 a אליכם אקרא אישים חבירים
במאור כל סתום עין ועורים	אסקל מעגלי צדק והדרך
ותפולו ואין מקים ואין מרים	לבל תכשלו מהר ידידי
ואל תאמרו דברים הם גזורים	תהי יראת אלהים על פניכם
ואין מנוס ואין מקלט בערים	ומה בצע בתם דרכי ועסקי
לבד ברצון אדון כל היצורים	דעו כי אין מחייב שם וגזר
בעת יחפץ לגזור הדברים	במדעו מחייב כל ויגזור
באפשרות וכח הם קשורים	אבל טרם אשר ידיו מצואים
אשר בחר באפשרות ומקרים	וזה ברצון אלהינו וחפצו
הפכיו באשר יהיו סדורים	וכל שואל הידע אל באחד
היהיו עת בעינם כשאורים	כמו שואל בסכלותו לבנים
בחשבו כי ידיעת אל אכזרים	ועוד יוסיף להרע בסכלות
במדעם עתידים או בעוברים	אשר תחת זמן יהיו בלולים

כמו הופר והורם הגדרים	ושואל זה מבקש טענת שוא
להטות כאשר יחפוץ ויערים	רשות כל איש נחונה היא בידו
לפועל כל צפונים או ברורים	וכל מעשיו צפונים הם גלויים
אדון עולם ויחד הם אסורים	רצוני יהיה דבק בחפץ
ברגע יהיו באים וגוזרים	כאחד יפעלו דבר ועושים
ואדם בו נאבד תוך חדרים	ואין תמה הכי תבל כמו אש
ואין לחוש פרטים הקצרים	§ 68 והכול בא כפי רוב מעשי אל
הכי הכול במשפטים ישרים	ואל תחשוד לעקול הגזירות
תהי מוכתה לאחר הסתרים	ועת תשמע בקול הובר מעונן
ומשדי כמו מורדים וממרים	ולא תירא לפגע או למקרה
יהי עושה חדשים לבקרים	ולא תרע אשר כל יחפוץ אל

In an appendix, which Pulgar calls the מעונן ספור—"the narrative of the confused" (?), many amusing instances are adduced to show the disappointments that have awaited the dupes of the astrologers, but the space at my disposal does not allow me to linger any further upon this part, interesting though it is, and looking forward to the time when I may enjoy the good fortune to publish the עור הדת in its entirety, I pass on to Part IV.

PART IV.

This contains a defence of the study of philosophy and natural science. From a careful study of the עור הדת and our knowledge that Pulgar was a doctor, it may reasonably be inferred that he devoted much time and attention to scientific research, as it was understood in his age, and that he, in this part of his work, is defending himself against the complaints and criticisms which such pursuits undoubtedly received from many of his contemporaries, who looked upon a too curious investigation into the working of natural laws as signs of a weak faith and of indifference to the practices of religious piety. Returning to the text before us, we read that the author complains of the annoyance and the irritation to which men of knowledge are subjected by reason that the most foolish of men take

upon themselves to attack the doings of their betters. Not, however, that this is a matter for surprise. Solomon has told us (Prov. xxix. 27) that the perfect way is the abomination of the wicked, &c. From the oft-quoted confession of Akiba (Pesachim, 49 b) we know how severe and bitter is the contempt and loathing which the עם הארץ bears towards the wise man. Pulgar says he feels impelled to come forward and defend those studies which confer so great a benefit upon mankind, and he divides the opponents of the study of natural science into four classes. The first class comprises those who look upon themselves as the only good and pious ones, the only true defenders of religion. These men cast a slur upon students, and not, as Pulgar feels bound to acknowledge, without some just cause. For it must be owned that we do find men, with much pretension, but with little or no real claim to scientific culture, who speak disrespectfully of the Torah and its behests ובאמת קצת המתחילים בלימוד ההגיון וגם בהכמות ולא הגיעו עד תכלית שום מדע והם הנקראים מתפלספים ימיהו דבריהם . . . ומולולין בכבוד מוסרי הרת

§ 74. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But such a man is the Epikoros. The truly wise man acts differently. He scrupulously observes every precept great and small, and, his knowledge and investigations throwing much light upon the reasons for the precepts, he is enabled to perform his religious duties with a truer devotion than would otherwise be the case. He uses the great gifts of God—knowledge, thought, reason—to justify the ways of Heaven to man. The second class of objectors are the Kabbalists. The Kabbalists will have it that all their traditions and practices are derived, unaltered and untainted, direct from on high. They forget that it was the constant practice of the sages to keep the text of Scripture free from all addition and alteration, and that notwithstanding all their solicitude and care discrepancies have crept into the sacred text והשתדלותם כל חריצותם במסורתם עד היום שניים בכתבי הקודש בקצת מקומות זה ידוע אצל כל

§ 75. If time has, then, left its mark

even upon the word of God, how far-fetched is the claim that the strange practices of the Kabbala should have reached the present generation without blemish. Two faults in particular Pulgar finds in the books of the Kabbalists—the first being the introduction of strange, uncouth words and expressions, and, secondly, an utter absence of precision and logic, leading in some cases to a positive denial of the Unity of God ומקצתם בפירה גמורה (= "mystery"), § 75 a¹. The Kabbalists claim that they understand mysteries hidden from other men, and that they possess the power by means of charms to change the course of Nature. Pulgar relates the following little incident as related to him by a certain Kabbalist, Maistre Marcus by name מאישטרי מרקש (§ 75 a), who when a youth was the pupil of a renowned scholar living in the German isles א"י אשכנז. The savant, jealous lest his disciple should, when his studies were completed, have acquired as profound a knowledge of the mysterious as he himself, refrained from imparting to the youth as much of his knowledge as the latter desired. Our student was driven to strategy. One night, whilst his master was sleeping, the enterprising seeker after knowledge took from beneath the pillow of his teacher, where it had been placed for greater security, a certain famous work the perusal of which had hitherto been denied him. The fates, ever on the side of the brave, caused the master's sleep to be prolonged until the student had the time not only to make a copy of the work, but likewise to replace it beneath the pillow of the unsuspecting pedagogue. What was the reward of the student's action? He made his way homeward, and by the help of one of the incantations found in the book he made a journey of four months in the third part of one day. This, says Pulgar, as it were triumphantly, is the trash taught, and alas unfortunately believed by

¹ On the criticism of the language of Kabbalistic works the reader is referred to Luzzatto's *חכמה הקבלה*; and on the alleged denial of the doctrine of the Unity of God to Jellinek's *Beiträge*, Leipzig, 185 a, p. 51.

some of the most honoured of our people **בהרבה אנשים מנכבדי** (§ 76). On passing from this subject, Pulgar asks his reader to turn to his book **מוסר בנין בס'—** **מוסר בנין אשר לי** § 76. Who are the third class of objectors? This class comprises the men who elevate the laws of Nature, which are but the desires of Heaven, until they consider them the equals of God, aye, even as the enemy of the Creator **והשבם כי הטבע שונאו של הק"ב ופועל ועושה כנגדו** and therefore deny the omnipotence of God and the possibility of miracles. Pulgar explains the word **טבע**. The word **טבע**, generally translated as Nature, or material, denotes the channel and instruments of God's desires operating upon matter, the **נטבע**. The laws of Nature are the agency, call this agent as you will **מלאך**, or **שרף**, or **שר**, or anything else you wish. The important thing to remember is that it is not an independent agent. It is dependent and subordinate to God **הוא שלוחו של יוצר** **ומשועבר לו**. What God ordains it to do it does. Its activity is from God, and God, too, can suspend and destroy this activity whenever he wishes it. Such is the teaching of true philosophy. Nature is one of the agents of Heaven, carrying out the work of a Power outside itself—subject to Heaven, and to Heaven alone. In the same way that God controls Nature, so too does man control himself, and Free-will is the gift of God to man. This leads us to the fourth class, i. e. those that believe in wizards, witches, the power of incantation, and the like—all of which, he says, are numerous indeed to-day among us. **ואמונות כאלה בהמונינו** (the **המון** again) **היום רבות**. מהם אמונת הכישוף והוא אמונתם כי כשיתערבו דברים ידועים שאין לאחד מהם שום ערך ולא שום תלוי להיותו לנפעל ויושמו במקום ידוע שיתחדש ממנו דבר כזה ויתפרסם ביניהם כי פלוני עשה כישוף והחליהו ופלונית עשה כישוף לפלונית וחשקתהו. ופלונית עשתה כישוף לפלונית והסירה חלבה מדריה וכאלה מהחלות ושגעות רבות נשקעות בלבבותם עד אשר אין רשות בשום משיכל לחדש בהם בפני רוב הגוערים בו והנשבעים והמעידים עליהם (§§ 77, 77 a). We are told that such a witch has

done this, and such a witch has done that. And there is no end. On this point the Torah is clear. מכשפה לא תחיה. She that claims to be a witch—suffer her not to live. The belief in witchcraft results from the bad influence of a belief in astrology. Pulgar gives us a quotation from a work on witchcraft as follows (§ 78): להם וזה לשונם: לאהבה ולחשק הנשים * לך בשוק ביום השוק וקנה לך מראה במחיר הראשון אשר ישאל החנוני ושוב לביתך והשמר לך פן תדבר דבר בהליכה ולא בחזרה ותראה את המראה לאי זו אשה שתחפון מרם נפלה מידך ותקשור את לבבה עמך ותאהבתך. "If you desire a certain woman to love you, act as follows: Go to the market on the market day. Buy a mirror, and pay for it the first price asked by the vendor. Speak neither going nor when returning home. Hold the mirror in front of the woman in question before you put it away from your hand, and that hitherto obdurate female will find you irresistible." Again, once there was a man gambling, and he had a spindle (פלך) beneath him. He won at the gaming. Therefore, say these foolish ones, to win at gaming don't forget the spindle. But, says Pulgar, these people go beyond this. They have prayers formed to the names of angels and demons דברי תחנונות לשמות מלאכים או שדים. From this dangerous practice arises the suggestion that idol worship is not entirely false, for they go on to say that having secured the intercession of God's favourites, the Deity will be loath to deny requests backed up by the supplications of saints and angels חשבם כי האל ית' יתנה מאד (§ 78 a). The aid of God alone, protests Pulgar, we seek, this and the cultivation of the world in which he has placed us. We rely upon him and upon the energies and the brain he has given us. For food we till the ground, to cure our pains and assuage our infirmities we study and practise the science of medicine, &c. It is said that it is impossible for us ever to get into the inner mysteries of nature. It may be so. It is not derogatory for a scientist to acknowledge this. Yet

though there be many things we do not know, nevertheless much have we found out by research. We reason from effects back to causes, and although we cannot be sure of the precise nature of the cause, the important thing is that we can fairly well predict the nature of the result. We do not know, says Pulgar, why fire is heating, nor the causes of magnetic attraction *המשכת האבן אל הברזל*, yet in both cases we have a good working knowledge, and this knowledge we use with certainty and for our benefit. Pulgar does not deny that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. He does not deny, he says, that there may be matters subject to mental effort at present beyond our vision on the surface. In such matters a philosopher pleads ignorance. He does not know; he becomes an agnostic *אין לשום משכיל למהר ולקפוץ* *בהכחשת כל דבר נפלא וזר' ואמנם אני מכחיש ומכזיב אותם אשר* (§ 80). It is against practices absolutely forbidden by the Torah that the author lifts up his voice in resolute and unceasing protest.

PART V.

This, the concluding chapter of the work, though not without interest of its own, is less likely to engage the attention of the historical student than other parts of the *Ezer ha-Dat*. It deals with an old question, i. e. the attraction which a certain class of men find in depreciating the world in which they live, and in building up charming castles in the air in respect of their expectations of a future and happier existence. Having weaned his thoughts from the attractions of this world, the author once during his wanderings found himself in the company of an aged man clad in the garb of an anchorite or hermit. To him the author opened his heart. The hermit was all kindness, and led him to Mount Gilboa, where they reached the graves of Desire (*קברות התאוה*). In the modest hut or cave the two

men shared the frugal meal, and then, resting after the repast, they heard the conversation of immortal spirits. In the words familiar to those acquainted with the eschatological phrases of the Talmud the one spirit said to the other, "Sister, let us not converse here, for living men listen to the words of immortal spirits." The hermit thereupon arose and besought the invisible speaker not to remove hence, for indeed, he said, it is to learn from you that we have come hither. A conversation then ensued between the hermit and the spirit, to which the author listens, an edified spectator. The joys and energies of the body are passed in review between the speakers, the hermit in praise, the unknown on the other hand bent on showing how all physical joys become the source of sorrow, shame, and weakness. Passing from the discussion of the merits or otherwise of the attractions of the body, the hermit seeks to gain from the spirit the admission that the nether world contains nothing so exquisite as the ambitions and gratifications of the mind in the contemplation of its creations and victories. No, answers the spirit, imagination is illusion, and because of the contrast the greater source of disappointment. The Living are as in a net; the Dead alone know what is existence, for they alone have reached "the rest and the knowledge." They alone are free from the trammels and limitations of the body. They have put off the mortal coil, and live eternally. The angel is here introduced, and reconciles the views of the disputants. The scale, or degree of importance, of living is threefold. The first, or lowest, is that found among ordinary, even ignorant folk. These appreciate only what is material. They do not comprehend, indeed they despise all mental discipline, and spiritually they are dead. The second is an advance over the previous. They are able to reason from the material to the mental, from the coarse and visible to the finer and invisible. But they do not. Knowing the better way they are yet content to follow the worse. The third and highest stage is that of the *משכילים הקנויים*, those in a state

of constant wisdom ¹. Freed from the limitations of the body they are united and are at one with the Active Intelligence. The author finds himself compelled to own that the Dead had won the day. For it is clear that none attain this life while still swathed by the cerements of earth, and in truth no man sees God while alive וְהִי לֹא יֵרָאֵי הָאָדָם חַיִּים. In a beautiful poem, the author, addressing his soul, bids it rejoice in the contemplation of its glorious future, and hearing this the Dead too give utterance to the praises of God.

Such in outline is the *Ezer ha-Dat*, the Hebrew text of which I hope soon to publish, and from these notes may perhaps be gleaned something of the power and character of its author. Isaac Pulgar is a name but little known to the present generation, but undoubtedly its possessor was a man fit to take his seat among the greatest of Israel's sons that shed lustre and fame upon the communities of the Iberian Peninsula.

G. BELASCO.

¹ Comp. Buxtorf's *Lexicon*, p. 2391, קַיִן הַמוֹשְׁכִיחַ = *Habitus intellectualis*.